



Coast Guard Flag Voice 59

MINORITY WOMEN OFFICER RETENTION STUDY

As the population of the United States becomes increasingly diverse, minorities and women are entering the workforce in greater numbers and changing the Coast Guard's composition. Since FY90, both populations' percentage representation in the officer corps has doubled. While much data analysis and several Coast Guard studies have focused on women or minorities in general, little analysis has looked at minority women's unique experiences.

Although the Coast Guard women integrated into active duty more than 25 years ago, only one minority woman officer has achieved the rank of O-5. Anecdotal evidence suggests in their assimilation into the Coast Guard many minority women officers experience two disadvantages - their race and gender. Many report feeling dissatisfied and isolated in a work environment that makes them feel "marginalized" rather than valued team players.

From discussions and panels at the 1998 National Naval Officers' Association (NNOA) Conference and the more recent Diversity Summit (see Flag Voice 37), we identified a need to systematically approach understanding Coast Guard minority women officers' unique experiences. Retaining and advancing these women to senior management positions is not a "nice" issue, but a business imperative. The Service needs to identify and eliminate outdated behavior and barriers that systemically restrict minority women officers' opportunities. We need to identify and understand real issues and provide leaders with practical, how-to guidance in making all Team Coast Guard members feel valued as contributing members of their units and the Service.

Efforts to retain Coast Guard personnel need to be a priority from the minute each person walks through the gate. The Study Team will look into at least these issues, beginning with minority women officers' entrance at each accession point.

- Factors that contribute to high-performing minority women officers' success.
- Barriers that systemically restrict minority women officers' opportunities.
- Practical training for Coast Guard supervisors on how to make all members of their work group feel like valued members of the team.
- Officers' retention statistics by gender and ethnicity.
- Initiatives being taken to enhance retention.
- Corporate America's best practices on promoting and retaining minority women.
- Availability of role models and mentors for minority women officers.

After studying these and related issues, the Team will recommend changes to Coast Guard policies and

programs that will enhance minority women officers' retention.

The Study Team consists of members selected based on their experiences, expertise, and/or organizational role. The Team is not a decision-making body; it will research, collect, and analyze data, develop conclusions, and recommend policy and process changes to enhance minority women officers' retention to me, the Assistant Commandant for Human Resources (G-W).

G-WTL-1 (Team Leader) -- CDR Judith Keene
Coast Guard Academy -- Dr. Judith Youngman
Coast Guard Academy -- CDR Ken Sherwood
Coast Guard Academy -- Ms. JoAnn Miller
Training Center Cape May -- CDR Curt Odom
G-WPM -- CDR Gary Alexander
Group Lower Miss. River -- LCDR Sharon Donald-Baynes
G-WTT -- LCDR Keith Curran/LCDR Bill Kelly

(Human Performance Technology (HPT) Consultants)
CGPC-opm -- LT Bess Howard
G-OCU -- LTJG Rachelle Cannon
G-MRP -- LTJG Tangela Hummons
USCGC ELM -- LTJG Nikki Carter

The Guidance Team will direct the study at key decision points.

G-WTL (Guidance Team Leader) -- CAPT Bienvenido Abiles
G-WPM -- CAPT Kenneth Ward
Personnel Command -- CAPT Steven Froehlich
Personnel Command -- CAPT Jody Breckenridge
MSO Wilmington -- CAPT John Williams

The Study Team will conduct focus groups with minority women officers, Coast Guard Academy cadets, officer candidates and other Coast Guard personnel. The Team will brief the Guidance Team at the study's commencement, midway point, and conclusion. Deliverables include a briefing to G-C, G-CV, and G-W on the study's findings and recommendations and a follow-up decision memorandum.

The initial meeting was held in September with a final report to the Commandant in May.

I urge those who have insights on this important issue to share them with Study Team members by E-mail, fax, letter, or personal contact.

Regards, FL Ames



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